

NOTES ON SOME SPECIES OF BIRDS OF THE  
ISLAND OF CUBA.

BY DR. JOHN GUNDLACH.

*Calypte helenæ* Gundl.

IN the synonymy given by Mr. Charles B. Cory in his 'Birds of the West Indies' may be added between *Calypte helenæ* Gould, ✓  
Mon. Troch. III, pl. 136 (1861), and Gray, Handb. Bds. I, p. 145 (1869), the reference: Gundl. Repert. Fisico-Nat. Cuba, I, 1866, p. 291; and between Gundl. J. f. O. 1874, p. 144, and Muls. Hist. Nat. Ois. Mouch., IV, p. 77 (1877), the reference: Gundl. Contrib. a la Orn. Cuba, 1876, p. 109.

The reference *Orthorhynchus boothi* Cab., J. f. O., is *boothi* Gundl. in Cab., J. f. O., 1856, p. 99, where Dr. Cabanis in a note says that the name *boothi* proposed by me for *helenæ* may be omitted because the species named by De Lattre *helenæ* is not of the same genus.

Mr. Cory gives the color of the head, throat, and elongated feathers of the neck as metallic red, almost pink in some lights, but this color changes in some lights also to golden and green.

Mr. Lawrence records, in Ann. N. Y. Lyc. Nat. Hist. 1860. that the male has a well defined terminal band on the tail, nearly equal to one quarter of its length. In the young males and females it exists also inside of the white tip and occupies more space than in the adult male.

The young male has a more bluish green back than the female, and the tail of the old male is emarginate, and that of the young male (or before the perfect plumage) and the female rounded. I have published in J. f. O. IV, 1856, pp. 99-101, a description of this species.

The first specimen, a young male with only four perfect red feathers on the throat, I killed in March, 1844, near Cardenas, searching a flower of *Hibiscus*. Four years afterwards I found a locality on the border of the mangrove, where the flowers of *Avicennia*, *Hibiscus*, etc., supply much nectar. There I have killed many specimens of both sexes in its perfectly colored head and throat and in its ruff of elongated feathers. The first description of this new species I published in Lembeye's Aves de Cuba, 1850, p. 70. The name *helenæ* is given in respect to Doña

Elena de Faz, wife of Don Carlos Booth, my first protector in this island.

The locality mentioned was afterwards destroyed by a railroad, and I found no more of this little bird at Cardenas. Never have I observed the species in other places in the western part of this island, except in a key near Cardenas. In 1857 I visited the city of Santiago de Cuba in the eastern part of this island, and also in the years from 1885 to 1888. There the species is common in the spring. A friend who resides in Puerto-Principe (the middle part of the island) has observed the species there, and like me only during the months of January to end of April. In May it disappears, but I have observed later single specimens in the interior of the island. It seems that they breed there.

The male has a fine song. This species flies before the flowers in a horizontal direction like moths (sphinges), not like *Chlorestes riccordi* with an inclined body and moving his long forked tail.

My observations seem to prove that the males go through two moults in every year. I have noticed that young males with the plumage similar to that of the female have sometimes no red, perfect feathers on the throat. These may be young ones one year of age. Other specimens have perfectly grown red feathers on the head and throat, but not the ruff of elongated feathers. The tail is emarginated and without the white spots. These are perhaps males of two years of age; and others with the entirely perfect plumage are probably very old males. I will continue my observations.

In Vol. VI, p. 46, of 'The Auk' is an article entitled "Remarks upon abnormal coloring of plumage observed in several species of birds," by George N. Lawrence. The principal object of these remarks was a specimen of *Psittacus* with uniform pale blue plumage, described in 1862 (Ann. Lyc. of Nat. Hist., Vol. VII, p. 475) as a new species from Panama under the name of *Psittacus subcæruleus* Lawr., figured afterwards by Dr. Otto Finsch of the Bremen Museum in 1865 from the original specimen. In 1871 (Ibis, p. 94) Mr. Salvin considers the specimen as an accidental variety of the *B. tovi*.

I have noticed with great interest the explanation given by Mr. Lawrence, and I have noticed two similar cases of blue-colored *Chrysotis leucocephalus* Linn. I am convinced that Mr. Lawrence has good reasons for his opinion. In the bleu-colored

Parrots the yellow part of the green color is absent and in albinism the yellow color is absent from the blue part.

Before I arrived in Cuba, in 1839, a blue Parrot was brought from the Island of Pinos (which belongs to the Island of Cuba) to Havana. Many persons have seen this bird. During my residence at the Island of Pinos I tried to obtain information of that species, but without result, and I was of the opinion that the bird was an exotic one, brought first to the Island of Pinos and afterwards to Havana.

In the year 1887 another blue Parrot was captured in the mountains of Guantanamo (the more eastern part of the island of Cuba). The owner was a peasant. When my friend Don Jorge Preval, owner of a coffee estate in his vicinity, received notice of this bird, his intention was to procure the specimen at any price, but a few days before it was sold to a soldier and sent to Santiago de Cuba. I was at that time absent, and after my return I was unable to ascertain whether the Parrot was still at Santiago de Cuba.

Persons who saw this Parrot say that it had the front white and the throat red, like the type of *Chrysotis leucocephala* Linn. I am convinced that both specimens were, like that observed by Mr. Lawrence, only an accidental variety. ✓

Parrots when very old have many red or yellow feathers on different parts of the body, especially when kept in captivity. I have not seen a white Parrot in this island, but have seen an entirely yellow *Chrysotis leucocephalus* with the front white and the throat red.

I have killed also a common Parrot with the front blackish. This is a case of *melanism*. I have this specimen.

A *Xiphidiopicus procussus* Temm., female, killed by me in a key near Cardenas, has a yellow tint on all the green parts. It is the only specimen observed, and may be a variety with a prevailing yellow tint and not a different species. ✓

I have seen or killed many more or less perfect albinos; I give here the list.

- ✓ *Mimocichla rubripes* Temm., entirely white.
- ✓ *Geothlypis trichas* Linn., ♂, almost yellow, without the black frontal band.
- ✓ *Euthia lepida* Linn. (*olivacca* Gmel.), entirely white, and another one with yellow parts.
- ✓ *Sturnella hippocrepis* Wagl., entirely white except the yellow throat.

- ✓ *Quiscalus gundlachi* Cass., entirely white.
- ✓ *Myiarchus sagrae* Gundl., with pale gray, not brown, upper parts.
- ✓ *Crotophaga ani* Linn., one specimen uniform pale reddish brown; another specimen with great white spots; another with a great many white feathers intermixed on the throat and neck; another with grayish black on the upper parts.
- ✓ *Sauvothera merlini* D'Orb., one specimen entirely white and another with intermixed white and yellowish spots.
- ✓ *Centurus superciliaris* Temm., white, preserving the red parts; another like specimen is figured in La Sagra's *Historia fisica, politica y natural de la Isla de Cuba*.
- ✓ *Cathartes aura* Linn., entirely white, and another specimen with white spots intermixed.
- ✓ *Patagianus corensis* Gmel., entirely white, and another specimen of pale gray color.
- ✓ *Zenaidura macroura* (*carolinensis* Linn.) with uniform reddish brown color.
- ✓ *Columbigallina passerina* Linn., also uniform reddish brown.
- ✓ *Starnæus cyanocephala* Linn., with white spots.
- ✓ *Ortyx cubanensis* Gould, entirely white.
- ✓ *Ægialitis semifalmata* Bon., with the head, neck, and breast white, with only some feathers of normal color.
- ✓ *Tringa minutilla* Vieill., with some white on the upper parts.
- ✓ *Nycticorax violaceus* Linn., entirely white.
- ✓ *Spatula clypeata* Linn., ♀, very pale colored.

✓ An *Antrostomus carolinensis* Linn., ♀, had the stomach filled with feathers and little pieces of bones (probably of a Warbler), and one of the tail-feathers was colored like those of the male (the inner web white above).

✓ In none of the American authors do I find a satisfactory description of *Pelecanus fuscus*, respecting the color of the head and neck of the different ages. The color of both sexes of the same age is the same. The young bird has the head and neck simply dark brown with a grayish tint; afterwards the head is white and this color extends down the neck as a bordering of the pouch, and somewhat beyond, and there is a white spot on the region of the furcula; the rest of the neck is dark chestnut; the extreme part of the neck between the shoulders has no white. The neck has a more downy and softer plumage than in the young ones. Afterwards the head becomes yellow, the white color which bordered the pouch extends over the whole fore part of the neck; the posterior part is dark chestnut, and the extreme part between the shoulders is white. The occiput has elongated white feathers. The very old bird has the head yellow, all the

neck white, with a yellowish tint toward the shoulders. This is the permanent plumage of the oldest birds. During the moult occur transitions between the different phases of coloring.

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## DESCRIPTION OF A SUPPOSED NEW *MYRMECIZA*.

BY GEORGE K. CHERRIE.

THERE are in the collection of the Museo Nacional twenty specimens referable to the genus *Myrmeciza*. Thirteen of these come from the eastern side of the great mountain range, and seven from the Pacific lowlands. The form from the Pacific side I suppose to be new. However, without either works of reference or authentically identified specimens, I can feel no certainty about which form really is *M. immaculata*. I do not even know from what locality the type specimen of *immaculata* came. My supposition that the Pacific form is the new one is based on Mr. Ridgway's note under *Myrmeciza immaculata* in a paper "On a collection of birds from the Hacienda la Palma, Gulf of Nicoya, Costa Rica," by C. C. Nutting. (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. V, 1882, p. 398.) Mr. Ridgway says: "The female from La Palma is referred doubtfully to this species. It differs markedly from three other Costa Rican specimens, from the Atlantic coast, in having the jugulum and breast bright chestnut instead of dull chestnut brown, but I am unable to detect any other differences."

With the small series of specimens I have before me, other slight differences are discernible in coloration, besides a decided difference in size, as will be shown in the following descriptions and tables of measurements.

In case the western form may prove to be new, I would suggest the name *occidentalis*,\* and characterize the form as follows:

### ***Myrmeciza immaculata occidentalis* subsp. nov.**

*Male* (No. 1352, Museo Nacional, Pozo Azul, January, 1887, José C. Zelédon).—Above: whole head slate-black; back, a rather dark vandyke brown, the wings and tail with a more dusky shading. Below: throat

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\* I employ the name *occidentalis*, at the suggestion of Mr. José C. Zelédon, as indicative of the locality.